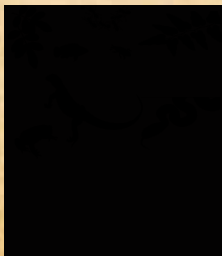


Field Identification of Select Native and Nonnative Reptiles in Florida



U.S. Army Corps
of Engineers



**Everglades Cooperative Invasive
Species Management Area**

Introduction

The continued proliferation of large, invasive reptiles poses a considerable threat to the natural areas of Florida. Past experience shows successful control requires early detection and a rapid response. Thus, receiving timely observations from individuals in the field is perhaps the most important step in the process. This set of field cards has been developed to assist field personnel in the identification of priority reptile species, and provide direction regarding how and where to report such observations. Help prevent the spread of nonnative species by following these three steps.

Step 1: Be Prepared

Improve your chances of spotting nonnatives by driving at slow speeds and minimizing the distractions in your vehicle. Scan likely habitats through open windows to improve visibility. Engage as many available observers as possible. Carry equipment that assists in making accurate observations: binoculars, a digital camera, a measuring tape, and GPS unit. Being prepared can result in high-quality observations and help ensure your safety.

Report Sightings by Phone or Online at:
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Step 2: Make Detailed Observations

It is important to make detailed observations whenever nonnative species are encountered. Every piece of information improves our understanding of these organisms and has implications for future control efforts. Here are a few key details to report:

- When was the animal observed?
(date, time of day, etc.)
- Where was the animal observed?
(coordinates, address, landmarks, etc.)
- Was the animal alive or dead?
- In what type of habitat was the animal found?
(marsh, canal bank, backyard, etc.)
- What species was observed?
(what is your level of confidence in your ID?)
- What was the approximate length of the animal?
(and was this an estimate, actual measurement, etc.)
- What was the animal's position or behavior?
(was it moving, stacked in a coil, swimming, submerged, outstretched, with other snakes, etc.)

Step 3: Report What You See

Timely, detailed reports are necessary catalysts for an effective rapid response. Quickly reporting observations is often the most important action individuals can take in stopping unwanted biological invasions. Reports can be made either over the phone or via the Internet using the contact information on the back of each card.

A Note About Status

In addition to nonnative species, these identification cards also feature a number of native reptiles for which invaders are sometimes confused. Thus, each species bears a status that reads either *nonnative* or *native*.

Native species additionally designated as *protected*, are afforded legal protection through either federal or state law. Some species are further identified as *venomous*, and extra care should be exercised in their presence.

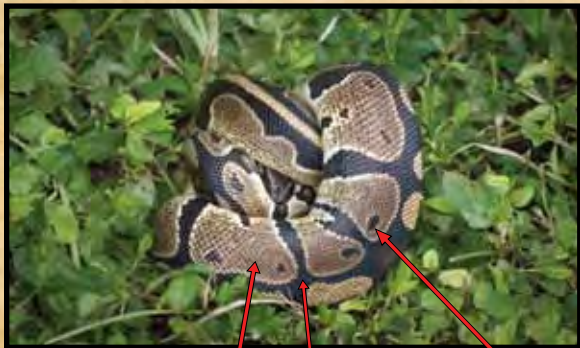
Finally, nonnative species known to be established and/or breeding in Florida bear the additional designation *invasive*.

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Ball Python

Python regius



1

2

3

Status: Nonnative

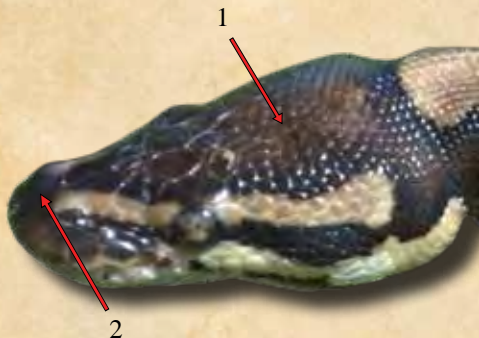
Length: Maximum length 6 feet

Body: Heavy-bodied

Pattern: Series of (1) light-colored, ovalish body markings on a (2) dark background; light markings sometimes enclosing (3) solid, dark circles

Ball Python

Python regius



Head: Almost always has a (1) dark arrowhead on top of the head that almost always contacts the eyes and (2) does not fade toward the snout

Notes: Though no populations are believed to be established, the ball python is commonly kept as a pet species.

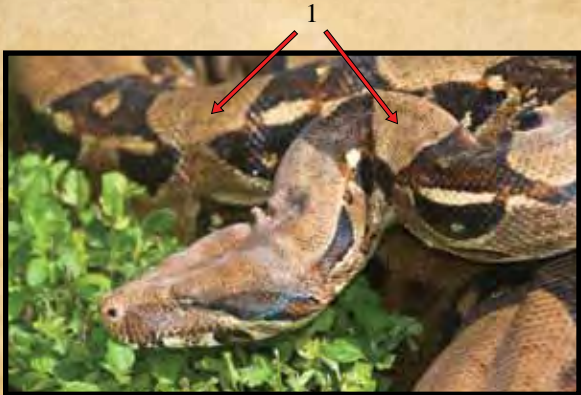
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Image Courtesy Pat Lynch, SFWMD

Common Boa

Boa constrictor



Status: Nonnative, Invasive

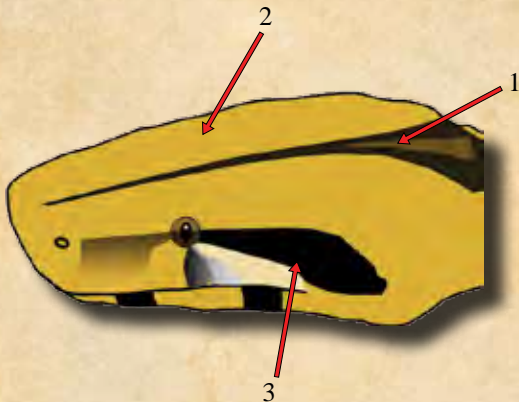
Length: Maximum length almost 15 feet

Body: Heavy-bodied

Pattern: (1) Series of large, tan-colored ovals progressively giving way to dark saddle-shaped blotches toward the tail; boas can exhibit a great variety of color patterns

Common Boa

Boa constrictor



Head: (1) Thin, dark longitudinal line or wedge on top of a (2) light-colored head; there is almost always a (3) bold, dark wedge behind each eye

Notes: One wild population is currently established in eastern Miami-Dade County.

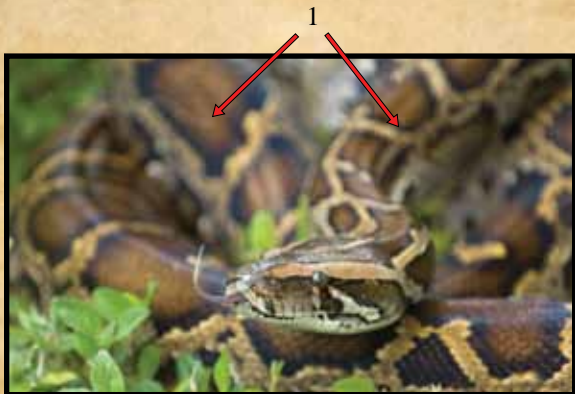
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Image Courtesy USGS

Burmese Python

Python molurus bivittatus



Status: Nonnative, Invasive

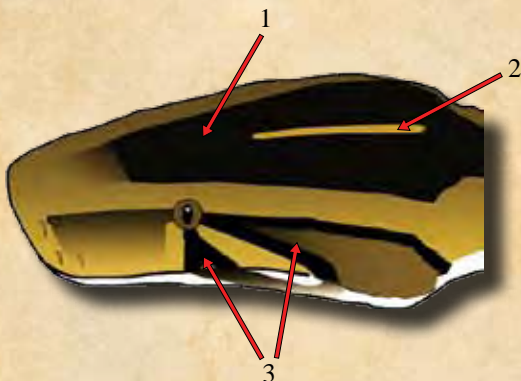
Length: Maximum length 25 feet

Body: Not as stout as other python species

Pattern: Network of (1) dark blotches along back and sides (like the pattern of a giraffe); blotches are irregular, not net-like, diamond-shaped, or round

Burmese Python

Python molurus bivittatus



Head: (1) Dark arrowhead on top of the head; (2) light-colored, longitudinal line; (3) dark wedges almost always present behind and below each eye

Notes: A large wild population is well-established in Everglades National Park and surrounding areas.

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Image Courtesy USGS

Northern African Python

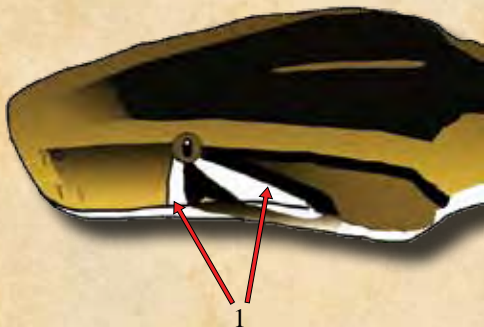
Python sebae



- Status:** Nonnative, Invasive
- Length:** Maximum length 25 feet
- Body:** Longer and heavier than most python species
- Pattern:** Network of dark markings along the back and sides, composed of irregular blotches down the full length of the body

Northern African Python

Python sebae



Head: Similar in appearance and pattern to the Burmese python, but bearing distinct (1) white wedges beneath each eye

Notes: A wild population is presently believed to be established in central Miami-Dade County.

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Image Courtesy USGS

Reticulated Python

Python reticulatus



1

Status: Nonnative

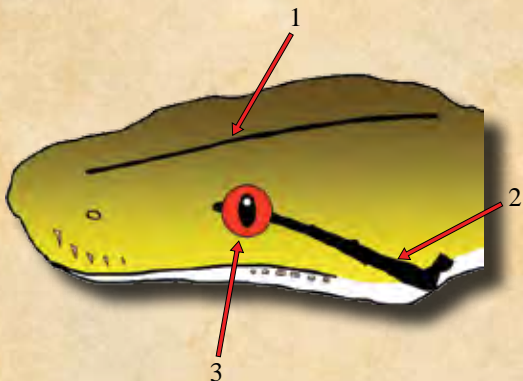
Length: Maximum length 30 feet

Body: Longer and thinner than most python species

Pattern: Body markings complex, bearing (1) light-bordered, dark lines that crisscross the body diagonally, reminiscent of a fishing net

Reticulated Python

Python reticulatus



Head: (1) Thin, dark, longitudinal line on top of the light-colored head; (2) single, dark line (not a wedge) behind each eye; (3) conspicuous red irises

Notes: Though a commonly kept species in the pet trade, no wild populations are believed to be established.

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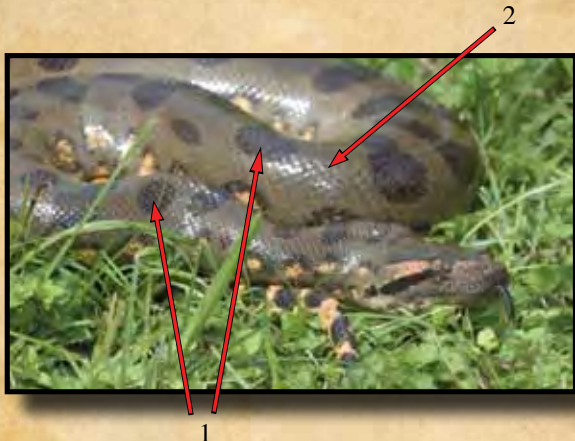


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Image Courtesy USGS

Green Anaconda

Eunectes murinus



Status: Nonnative

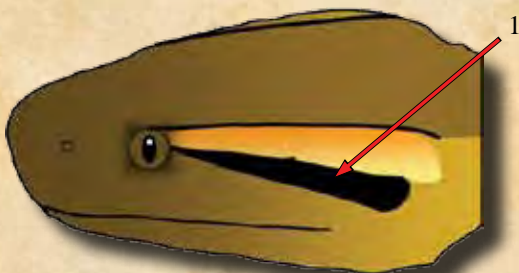
Length: Maximum length 24 feet

Body: Heavy bodied

Pattern: (1) Black circular marks scattered routinely across a (2) plain greenish-brown body; black marks usually solid rather than ring-like

Green Anaconda

Eunectes murinus



Head: Typically no marks visible on top of head; (1) single black stripe clearly visible behind each eye

Notes: Individuals have been observed from wetland environments in south Florida, though no populations are believed to be established.

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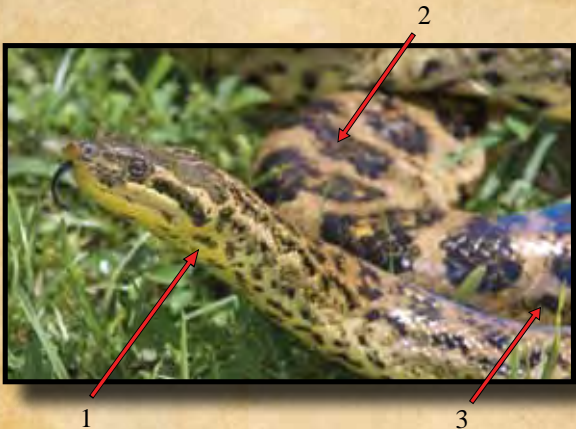


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Image Courtesy USGS

Yellow Anaconda

Eunectes notaeus



Status: Nonnative

Length: Maximum length 12½ feet

Body: Smaller than a green anaconda

Pattern: (1) Yellow background color with many (2) black blotches along the back and (3) smaller black blotches on the sides

Yellow Anaconda

Eunectes notaeus



Head: (1) Five dark, longitudinal stripes are typically found atop the (2) light-colored head

Notes: Though individuals have been recovered from wetland environments in south Florida, no wild populations are believed to be established.

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Image Courtesy USGS

Eastern Diamondback

Crotalus adamanteus



Status: Native, Venomous

Length: Maximum length 6 feet

Body: One of the largest native species

Pattern: (1) White-edged, dark-colored diamond-shaped markings along the length of the back; pale yellow belly;
(2) rattle present

Eastern Diamondback

Crotalus adamanteus



Head: Broad, spade-shaped head, with a (1) white-edged dark stripe beneath and behind each eye; elliptical pupils

Notes: These snakes are most frequently encountered in dry, upland habitats, but can also inhabit brackish, coastal environments.

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Image Courtesy Pat Lynch, SFWMD

Eastern Indigo Snake

Drymarchon corais couperi



- Status:** Native, Protected
- Length:** Maximum length over 6 feet
- Body:** One of our largest native species; relatively slender in appearance
- Pattern:** Uniform dark blue/black body coloration, almost appearing iridescent in the right light

Eastern Indigo Snake

Drymarchon corais couperi



Head: Dark, uniform color, with (1) flecks of red and (2) dark, vertical striping along the lips and checks

Notes: This federally endangered species is most commonly found in xeric, upland habitats, where it routinely makes use of burrows for shelter.

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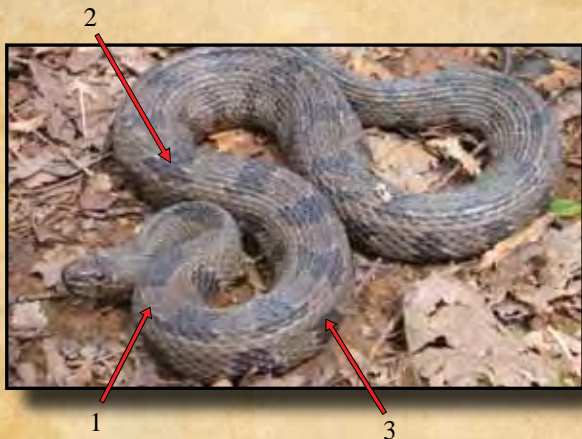


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Image Courtesy JD Wilson, Savannah River Ecology Lab

Brown Watersnake

Nerodia taxispilota



Status: Native

Length: Maximum length 4½ feet

Body: Heavy-bodied

Pattern: (1) Light brown background color; (2) dark brown, squarish blotches along the back separated from (3) similarly square blotches along sides

Brown Watersnake

Nerodia taxispilota



Head: Absence of spade-shape head; (1) rounded pupils; yellow underside with (2) flecks visible around chin

Habits: This snake is most commonly encountered sunning on vegetation, land, or structures in close proximity to fresh water.

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Image Courtesy Pat Lynch, SFWMD

Corn Snake

Elaphe guttata



1

Status: Native

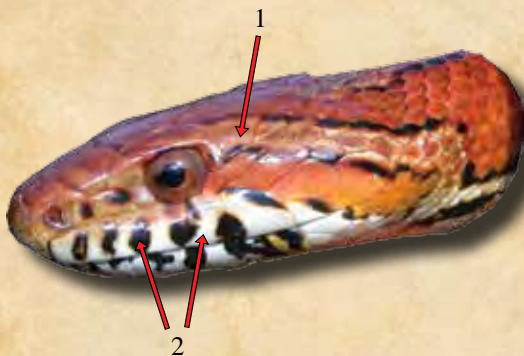
Length: Maximum length 3½ feet

Body: Slender

Pattern: (1) Back and sides bear alternating reddish, black-bordered blotches; underside boasts a black-and-white checkerboard pattern

Corn Snake

Elaphe guttata



Head: A pair of (1) black-edged brown lines converge to form a V-shape on the crown; mouth bears (2) alternating black and white markings

Notes: These snakes are found in a variety of habitats and are frequently encountered throughout the state.

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Image Courtesy JD Wilson, Savannah River Ecology Lab

Cottonmouth

Agkistrodon piscivorus



Status: Native, Venomous

Length: Maximum length 3 feet

Body: Heavy-bodied

Pattern: A series of light-colored, saddle-shaped markings down the back sometimes present, though color is highly variable and the pattern can be obscure

Cottonmouth

Agkistrodon piscivorus



Head: Spade-shaped head; line of (1) lighter-colored scales typically discernible above the mouth; (2) light-bordered dark stripe found behind each eye

Notes: These snakes are frequently encountered in freshwater wetland environments.

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Image Courtesy Pat Lynch, SFWMD

Gold Tegu

Tupinambis teguixin



Status: Nonnative, Invasive

Length: Maximum length 3½ feet

Body: Powerful limbs; thick tail

Pattern: Numerous (1) black and gold stripes running the length of the entire body, extending (2) through the tail

Gold Tegu

Tupinambis teguixin



Head: Only (1) one loreal scale present between eye and nostril

Notes: Individuals have been occasionally collected from a single location in southern Miami-Dade County.

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Image Courtesy Skip Snow, NPS

Black and White Tegu

Tupinambis merianae

2



1

Status: Nonnative, Invasive

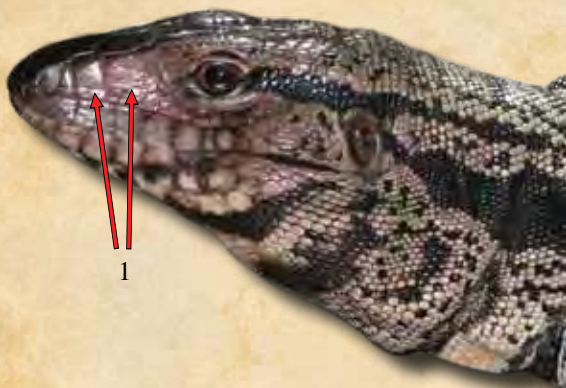
Length: Maximum length 3½ feet

Body: Powerful limbs; thick tail

Pattern: (1) Lateral line of light-colored spots present on either side of the body;
(2) alternating white and black bands extend through the tail

Black and White Tegu

Tupinambis merianae



Head: (1) Two loreal scales present between the eye and the nostril

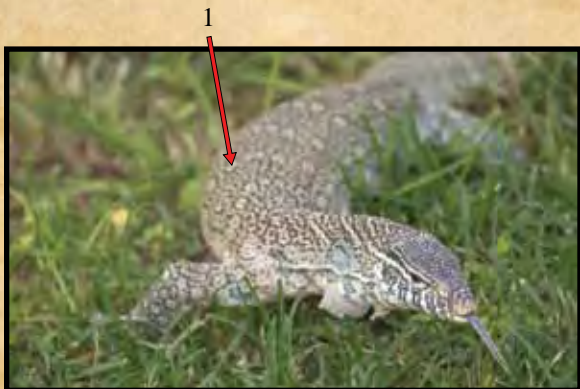
Notes: Individuals have been occasionally collected from a single location in southern Miami-Dade County.

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Nile Monitor

Varanus niloticus



Status: Nonnative, Invasive

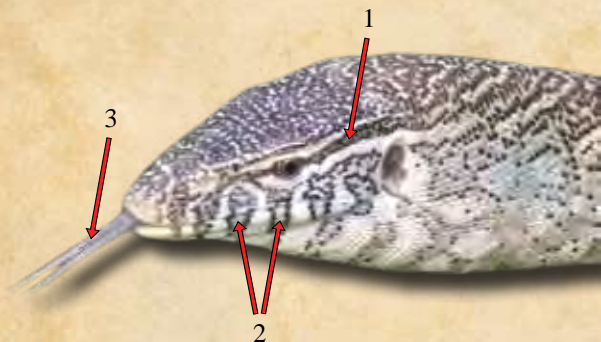
Length: Maximum length 6½ feet

Body: Powerful limbs; thick tail

Pattern: Dark background body coloration, with (1) 5 to 10 light crossbands composed of distinct circles; banding continues through end of tail

Nile Monitor

Varanus niloticus



Head: (1) Stripe present behind each eye; (2) 3-5 triangular facial markings along face ; (3) dark blue/purple tongue

Notes: A large, well-established population is present in the area of Cape Coral, and sightings are becoming more frequent in Miami-Dade County.

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